

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing: March 14, 2012  
Testimony of Molly Majewicz, Jualiann Marino, Patricia Socarras, Erica Naumann,  
Maria Torelli, and Nichole Pitruzzello  
Students at Mercy High School, Middletown, CT

**In Support of SB-280, An Act Revising the Penalty for Capital Felonies**

Our names are Molly Majewicz, Patricia Socarras, Erica Naumann, Maria Torelli, and Nichole Pitruzzello, and we are submitting testimony in support of the bill to repeal the death penalty, Senate Bill Number 280. We are students at Mercy High School, a Catholic diocesan high school in Middletown, and we have been closely studying capital punishment along with other life issues in our social justice class. After extensive thought and consideration, we have come to agree with the Catholic Church and its stance on Capital Punishment.

The Catholic Church is opposed the use of the death penalty because it goes against the Culture of Life that the Church is trying to spread in our world. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005 stated that "the death penalty diminishes all of us. Its use ought to be abandoned not only for what it does to those who are executed, but what it does to us as a society. We cannot teach respect for life by taking life". All humans have the right to life whether they have done horrific actions or not. We define life as conception to natural death and believe that reform and deterrence are more appropriate purposes for the criminal justice system than Capital Punishment. As Pope John Paul II stated in 1999, "Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform." We believe that we have the ability as a society to encourage reform for everyone while also deterring future crime. Studies continue to show that the death penalty is not a deterrent.

In our social justice class, we heard from Mr. Juan Melendez. Mr. Melendez was one of the 140 people exonerated from death row. Today we consider him one of the lucky people in this statistic, considering that there are many more that may be innocent, but were not able to prove their innocence in time. Even with his luck, Mr. Melendez still spent almost eighteen years on Florida's death row. His story also shows us that there will always be a possibility of executing an innocent person due to regular flaws in human nature. Our assurance of the guilt of each of these people on death row will never be a complete one hundred percent.

There are many arguments to the death penalty itself seeing that it is a controversial subject. The facts are hard to dispute—such as the fact that 140 people have been wrongly convicted and sentenced to death—but the moral aspect is less clear to some. Some people complain that the death penalty is only broken because it takes too long. If it hadn't taken so long with Mr. Melendez, then Florida would have executed an innocent person. The only way to make certain that innocent people will not be victimized is to repeal it all together. The death of an innocent person is always immoral.

The Church's teaching states that non-lethal means "better correspond to the concrete condition of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person". (CCC, 2267)The eye for an eye system worked in different times but has shown to be unnecessary and only contributes to the cycle of violence in modern day America.

Please vote in favor of Senate Bill Number 280. By doing so you may save the lives of innocent people and make our community a more peaceful place for us to live.

Thank you.